

CREATED EQUAL: AMERICA'S CIVIL RIGHTS STRUGGLE

The Abolitionists ❖ Slavery by Another Name ❖ The Loving Story ❖ Freedom Riders

C. PROMOTIONAL MATERIAL

1. Promotion and Social Media Suggestions

To draw the audience you seek and create awareness about *Created Equal* events, we encourage institutions to plan and implement a promotional campaign.

The following guidelines are intended to help you launch a successful campaign.

GETTING STARTED

To meet media and other deadlines, you will need to start promoting your institution's programming based on the films set at least two months in advance.

First, determine your target audience, goals for audience size, and the best communication methods for this program. Involving your fellow staff members in program planning can be a great way to foster new ideas and additional support. Try holding a staff brainstorming session.

Additionally, share your program plans with the director, board, friends, and other institution support groups and solicit their ideas and cooperation.

DEFINING YOUR TARGET AUDIENCE

Promotional materials such as flyers, press releases, and advertisements are excellent vehicles for reaching a multi-generational and diverse audience. However, many other groups in your community will be interested in the *Created Equal* programming you host. These groups can provide support through passing the information on to members of their organization who may be interested in attending or providing financial and other support. Examples include historical societies, museums, and arts and humanities councils.

DEVELOPING AN AUDIENCE PROFILE

When creating a profile of an audience you seek to reach with *Created Equal* publicity, please consider the following:

- Where do they work?
- What newspapers do they read?
- What radio programs do they listen to?
- What other community activities do they partake in?
- What social, religious, professional, and civic organizations do they belong to?
- What educational institutions do they or their children attend?
- What special arrangements do they require? Is a particular time of day best for programs? Need child care? Need signing or assistive listening devices for audience members who are Deaf or hard of hearing?

CREATED EQUAL: AMERICA'S CIVIL RIGHTS STRUGGLE

The Abolitionists ❖ Slavery by Another Name ❖ The Loving Story ❖ Freedom Riders

CHOOSING YOUR COMMUNICATION METHODS

Once you've determined "who" you would like to invite to your program, focus on "how" to let them know about the event. Communication methods fall into these categories:

1. Public Relations/Publicity

Contacting the media and using the web to publicize your event are keys to getting your message out to a mass audience. Here are a few methods you can use to contact your local media and promote your event through the web:

Press and Media

- Send a press release announcing the event to your local newspapers, radio stations, and television stations at least two to four weeks before the event. To identify these contacts, search online for the emails of reporters and news desks that would be interested in the program. There are also services such as PRWeb that allow your institution to distribute press releases online for a fee.
- If possible, address press releases to a specific reporter. If that information is not available, address press releases to the "News Desk" for larger publications or "Editor" for smaller publications. If these publications have a "Calendar of Events" section, send a press release to the contact for this section. Quite often, publications will run an article about an upcoming event and include information about it in a community calendar section.
- A week before the event, follow up the press release with phone calls to specific reporters and media outlets you would like to feature your press release and event. Sending a personal email to the reporters will increase likelihood of a response. In your email, attach the press release, paste a version of the press release within the body of the email, and introduce yourself and why you think the story may be of interest to them. When pitching media stories, it is important to focus on how your story can help them and be of interest to their audience.
- If you find that media professionals are interested in attending the event or in receiving more information, prepare a press kit. The kit should contain one copy of the press release and media alert, photos and biographies of your speakers and other key participants, and copies of all promotional materials.
- Television and radio stations are required to use a percentage of their airtime for non-profit and public announcements. Your local stations may be willing to air a free public service announcement (PSA) about your program or event.

CREATED EQUAL: AMERICA'S CIVIL RIGHTS STRUGGLE

The Abolitionists ❖ Slavery by Another Name ❖ The Loving Story ❖ Freedom Riders

Websites

- If your institution's website doesn't have a "Coming Events" section, talk to your webmaster about creating one. The web is an avenue to provide details to patrons and community members who may have heard about the event but need details about the date, time, location, topics discussed, etc. If you post information about *Created Equal* programming on your institution's website, be sure to include the web address on all promotional materials.
- Also include links on your website to your partners' sites.
- The web can also be useful for getting the word out about your event through other organizations' websites. Your city, community centers, local media outlets, and Chamber of Commerce may post information about community events on their websites. Many major cities also have web-based entertainment and event guides, like citysearch.com, which provide information about events in several cities.

Social Media

Social media is a cost-effective way to spread the word about your institution's event. Using different social media outlets helps create a positive perception and provides the opportunity for you to showcase the work of your organization. In essence, social media helps facilitate word-of-mouth marketing to increase attendance at your event. Below are general guidelines on how to engage your community via social media.

- **Focus on the goals.** With every piece of content that you share through a social media outlet, remember that the ultimate goal is to attract new followers—and energize existing followers—to attend your programming events.
- **Create and curate content.** Your social media strategy should include content about your event and, if possible, connect your program to current events. Share interesting articles, stories, and pictures that relate to the theme of your event.
- **Tailor your message.** Appeal to your organization's existing audience. Let them know that their contributions support this institution which is now hosting great community programming. There is a great opportunity to increase the positive feelings people have about your organization through social media. Also tailor your message to each network because each one has its own type of audience. Facebook users are not the same as Twitter users, and both are different from Instagram users.
- **Increase Facebook engagement.** By increasing Facebook "likes" on your posts, you are exposing your event to a wider audience who may not have known about your organization. These "likes" appear in feeds and therefore allow your institution to have a larger reach. This translates to positive engagement and perception for your institution and demonstrates to your audience the value of your institution.
- **Increase retweets on Twitter.** If you have a Twitter account, provide content that is worth sharing. Ask yourself: Would someone find this interesting and would they want to share it? Twitter ads are not as effective as having another organization or person retweet your tweet.
- **Leverage YouTube.** YouTube can be effective in letting people know what it is like to attend your event. You can record an event, place it on your YouTube channel, and then promote it on social media outlets. This lets your community get a "taste" of what occurs during your institution's events.

CREATED EQUAL: AMERICA'S CIVIL RIGHTS STRUGGLE

The Abolitionists ❖ Slavery by Another Name ❖ The Loving Story ❖ Freedom Riders

- **Don't be afraid to repeat.** Share a post or a piece of content more than once, especially one that is important or proves to be popular. Reposting a piece of content a few times (with about 6–12 hours between each repetition) ensures that almost all of your followers will have seen it.
- **Continue the conversation.** Be sure to communicate with your followers on social media. Responding to questions on the content that you post is one of many ways to stay engaged with your followers.
- **Timing is important.** Try to post content on social media during peak sharing hours to ensure you reach the largest audience possible. Suggested times for posting to each outlet:
 - Facebook – 1:00 PM to 4:00 PM
 - Twitter – 1:00 PM to 3:00 PM
 - Google+ – 9:00 AM to 11:00 AM
- **Try to reach new audiences.** The aim is for your website to be a daily destination for your audience. Social media can assist in helping drive traffic to your website and is an avenue to increase your website's exposure.

2. Direct Marketing

Once you identify community organizations and other groups as your target audience, you can use direct marketing to contact these groups and individual members of these groups.

- When contacting community and other organizations, use a personalized letter or phone call. You can also use a copy of your program flyer as an informal letter, if needed, adding a personal note.
- In addition to contacting organizations, you may want to target individuals in your community. If you keep a list of patrons' email addresses, sending a mass email message about the upcoming event can be an effective and inexpensive way to get the word out to a number of people. If email addresses are not available, you may want to consider creating a postcard to mail to institution patrons, community members, or others. You may send an email message about the program to community group leaders to post to their electronic discussion groups or forward on to their own address lists.

CREATED EQUAL: AMERICA'S CIVIL RIGHTS STRUGGLE

The Abolitionists ❖ Slavery by Another Name ❖ The Loving Story ❖ Freedom Riders

3. Personal Contact

Personal contact can be one of the most effective tools for communicating with key individuals and groups.

- Create a list of influential individuals in your community—the mayor, city council members, business leaders—who may be interested in your event. Send a letter and program flyer about the program and ask to meet with them to for further discussion. If a meeting is not possible, mention in your letter that you will call them within a week to follow up. Even if these individuals do not participate in the series, letting them know about the program could help the institution in other ways.
- When contacting community groups, ask to speak for five to ten minutes at one of their upcoming meetings or events. At the meeting, outline your overall programming plan and present convincing reasons why the series may be of interest to them. If speaking at a meeting is not possible, ask the group leaders to pass out flyers or mention the program to their members and staff.

4. Advertising

Often the most expensive promotional method, advertising can also be one of the most effective vehicles to promote your program.

- Promotional flyers and posters should be simple and include: the basic title or theme for the programming, an identifying graphic, times, place, speakers' names and brief biographical information, acknowledgment of funders and program partners, and if applicable, your institution's web address.
- Paid advertising in local newspapers and on local radio or television stations is an effective, but costly method. Before considering paid advertising, approach your local newspapers and radio and television stations regarding free public service announcements.

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

After reviewing this list, spend time thinking about which of these methods will work best for your program, your community, and your institution. Consider your budget and time available. Consider your planning team—is this effort a one-person production or committee based? Consider past successes and failures by looking at which communication methods you've used to promote past events. You may want to combine successful methods you've used before with new ideas. Also, keep in mind your goal for the size and type of audience you wish to attract.